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ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitudes of prospective teachers toward social diversity. Students were from selected teacher education programs at two different universities. The group of prospective teachers from one university received instruction in multicultural education, the other group did not. Pre- and post-questionnaire data were collected to ascertain if there were different attitudes toward social diversity between the two groups. One hundred thirty-four pre-post responses could be matched for comparison. Findings indicated that at the beginning of the students' professional semester there was no significant difference between the two groups. Both reported positive attitudes toward social diversity, with females reporting more positive attitudes than did males. At the end of the first professional semester there was a significant difference between the two groups. Students who had received instruction in multicultural education reported more positive attitudes toward social diversity. Since training in multicultural education impacts social diversity attitudes positively, areas in which teacher educators need to help themselves and their students gain multicultural competency are suggested. (Contains 21 references.) (LL)

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A STUDY OF THE PROSPECTIVE TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL DIVERSITY

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By

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A STUDY OF THE PROSPECTIVE TEACHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIAL DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined prospective teacher's attitudes toward social diversity. Prospective teachers were from two different universities. Prospective teachers from one university had received instruction in multicultural education, the other had not. Pre- and post questionnaire data were collected to ascertain if there were different attitudes toward social diversity between these two groups. One hundred thirty-four pre-post responses could be matched for comparison. Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, and t test.

Results were:

1. At the beginning of students' professional semester there was no significant difference between the two groups. Both groups reported positive attitudes toward social diversity. Females reported more positive attitudes than did males.

2. At the end of the first professional semester there was a significant difference between these two groups. Students who received instruction in multicultural education reported more positive attitudes toward social diversity.

This study indicates training in multicultural education impacts social diversity attitudes positively.

A STUDY OF THE PROSPECTIVE TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL DIVERSITY

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural and racial differences exist, and they should be openly discussed and understood by all. Understanding cultural and racial differences, designing appropriate educational experiences, and reinforcing that context are crucial to any educational system (Sedlacek & Brook, 1976). A comprehensive education program must be sufficiently humane to underscore how much humans should value one another and should be freely fluid to allow adaptation to ever-changing circumstances (Kierstead & Wagner, 1993). For education to be effective and humane, individual uniqueness must be taken into account.

The United States stands at the point of utmost diversity wholly apart from the other countries in its circumstances of birth and growth (Eurich, 1981). Higher education is expected to protect and advance the combination of ethnic roots, traditions, customs, and religious beliefs. The need to establish a sense of national belonging and loyalty in all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity, motivates an increased emphasis on multicultural education (Chiang, 1992).

The teacher is the basis of schooling (Maeroff, 1988). Teachers of today and tomorrow must develop the attitudinal changes and develop the instructional competencies necessary to make important differences in the lives of a population of children and youth which

in the United States which is increasingly heterogeneous (Rodriquez, 1983). McDiarmid (1992) claimed multicultural education should be a necessary first step in helping teachers and prospective teachers to work in the pluralistic class.

The Development of Multicultural Teacher Education in the United States

In 1964, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) fostered the thinking and consideration for change in teacher education in keeping with changing societal needs. In 1970, a report from the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education suggested that all educators and all institutions make efforts to better prepare teachers and all American children for the future.

In 1972, the AACTE Commission on Multicultural Education proposed the statement of "No One Model American", which was adopted by AACTE to improve the quality of society through an increased social awareness on the part of teachers and teacher educators.

The policy statements of state and local education authorities are significant sources of legal support and accountability for multicultural teacher education. The Wisconsin Administrative Code (1973) stated that training in human relations, including intergroup relations, must be part of teacher education leading to the initial certification as well as continuing education. The training has to include: attitudes, skills, and techniques for translating human relations knowledge into learning experiences for students; analyses of racism, prejudices, and discrimination in life; instructional materials and teachers' own attitudes toward feelings about racism, prejudices and discrimination; and the study of the values, lifestyles, and contributions of different ethnic, cultural, social, and

economic groups. In 1977, the Multicultural Standard for the Accreditation of Teacher Education stated regulations requiring teachers to have some training in multiculturalism.

Models for Multicultural Teacher Education

Sullivan (1974) claimed that the challenge of multicultural teacher education is to develop teachers who have the commitment, competence, confidence, and content knowledge necessary to teach effectively in culturally pluralistic contexts. Watson (1979) suggested that specific models of multicultural teacher education are influenced by five general policy approaches to the overall education of ethnic minorities. These are: legal recognition of ethnic pluralism, unification of ethnics into prevailing institutional and cultural structures, separation of ethnics from the mainstream social system, and non-recognition of or a laissez-faire attitude toward ethnic minorities.

Several models of multicultural education have been developed by educators. Grant (1977) proposed that both pre-service and inservice teacher training for multicultural education include the following three phases of development: self-awareness and understanding of ethnic attitudes, values; appreciation and acceptance of racial, cultural, and ethnic differences which derive from acquiring knowledge of tools and techniques for designing, implementing, and evaluating multicultural educational experiences.

The Baker model (1983) included three stages of professional growth. The acquisition stage focused on establishing a core of cultural information about ethnic pluralism. Development emphasized creating a personal philosophy of and commitment to

multicultural education. Involvement concentrated on implementing multicultural instruction in the classroom.

Arcinieger (1977) believed that the specific knowledge, skills, and orientations essential for effective multicultural teaching must stem from personal, professional and community needs and perspectives.

The major components of Mazon's (1977) model are: multicultural conceptual and philosophical understanding, sociocultural sensitivity to ethnic communities, cultural knowledge, culturally relevant diagnosis and assessment techniques, and appropriate strategies for instructional reform.

Gay (1977) suggested that multicultural teacher education programs should design their curriculum around three major components: knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

From the above models, a researcher might conceptualize three components of multicultural teacher education. These are: providing factual knowledge of cultural and ethnic pluralism, developing positive attitudes appropriate to ethnically different students, and helping students attain skills and techniques necessary in dealing with different ethnic and cultural communities.

II. PERSPECTIVES

According to the standard of NCATE (1977), teacher education programs should provide the preparation for individual prospective teachers to develop competencies for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving in different cultural settings. To meet the standards of NCATE and to face the reality of the pluralistic society, there is a need for every teacher education program to include this dimension in the teacher education curriculum.

Villegas' (1991) study concluded that to be successful beginning teachers need to master and implement the following competencies: (1) an attitude of respect for cultural differences, (2) procedures for getting to know the cultural resources of their students, (3) translation of this knowledge into effective instruction, and (4) skills in interactive decision making. Teacher educators have a moral and ethical responsibility to prepare teachers to be culturally responsive (Smith, 1991). Consistent with this, Banks (1988) suggested that racial attitudes may be positively changed through direct contact and involvement with people who differ culturally, ethnically, or racially. Teacher educators need to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences in order to effect positive attitudinal changes in students .

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain the preference for social diversity of students in education programs by examining the attitudes of diversity held by students at the beginning of their first professional semester in two selected education programs which are Anderson University and another institution . Students at Anderson University do not receive instruction in cultural diversity, but students from the second institution do. The second purpose of this study was to examine if there were different attitudes toward social diversity between students at Anderson University and from students who have taken a course in multicultural education from another institution. This will test if a course in multicultural education affects the attitudes of students in such a program. A third purpose of this study was to determine the areas in which teacher educators need to help themselves and their students gain multicultural competency.

III. POPULATION, INSTRUMENT, AND PROCEDURES

At the beginning and end of the Fall semester of 1992, questionnaires were sent to the teacher educators at both Anderson University and another teacher education institution. The educators were asked to distribute the questionnaires to their students prior to student admission to the teacher education program. Students were asked to provide the last four digits of their social security number in order to allow for a comparison of the pre and post responses. Two hundred five responses were returned (N_1= 136, AU= 69). Of them, one hundred thirty four responses could be matched for comparison (N_1= 78, AU= 56). The percentage of usable questionnaires was 65.4. The frequencies and percentages of returned and usable questionnaires are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Frequencies and Percentages for Questionnaires Returned by Prospective Teachers

	N			
	Institution 1		Anderson U.	
	returned	usable	returned	usable
pre	71	39	38	28
post	65	39	31	28

The " Preference for Social Diversity" questionnaire used in this study was developed by Zeigler in 1980 to measure attitudes toward social diversity (see Appendix). The test-retest reliability is reported to be .63. The questionnaire contained seventeen items, each with a five-point response scale ranging from "agree strongly" (5) to "disagree strongly" (1).

The Anderson University group, used as the control group, received no instruction in multicultural education, and the students from another institution, students who received instruction in multicultural education in their first professional semester, were used as the treatment group.

Data were analyzed using frequency distributions and comparisons were tested using t statistics to compare the group differences relative to pretest means and posttest means obtained students' first professional training semester. Geographic variables were also used to ascertain the differences between genders and ages.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The Cronbach Alpha reliabilities for the pre and post tests were .79 and .83 respectively. The means and standard deviations for pre test scores are shown in Table 2. There was no significant difference between the pretest mean on Preference of Social Diversity scores for the two institutions.

Table 2 Pre-test Total Means, Two Standard Deviations, and t Statistic for the Groups

Group	N	M	SD	t	p≤
Inst 1	39	64.59	7.98	.28	.78
AU	28	64.07	6.65		

From data reported in Table 2 it is included that both groups reported positive attitudes toward cultural differences (scores can range from 34 to 85 with 51 denoting a neutral position). Although the treatment groups did not differ relative to pretest scores. Reported in Table 3 are summary statistics for a comparison of Gender relative to pretest means. There was a significant pretest difference between genders ($t=2.93$, $p< .005$).

Table 3 Pre-test Means and the Associated t Statistic for the Comparison of Total Scores for Males and Females

	N	M	t	p
F	45	66.2		
M	21	60.76	2.93	.005*

Females from these two institutions, initially reported more positive attitudes toward social diversity than did the males.

As shown in Table 4, there was a significant difference between institutions at the end of the students' first professional semester. The treatment group had more positive attitudes toward social differences than did the control group ($M_1= 68.0$; $M_2(AU)= 62.7$).

Table 4 Total Post test Means, Standard Deviations, and the Associated ANOVA for Survey Participants

	N	M	SD	t	p<
N_1	39	68.0	7.53	2.91	.005*
N_2 (AU)	28	62.7	7.26		

There was no significant difference between genders of respondents of both institutions on the post test.

Table 5 Mean Differences and Standard Deviations for the Comparisons of Participation Groups for Males and Females

		N	M	SD
N_1	F	26	68.3	8.22
	M	13	67.5	6.19
N_2 (AU)	F	19	63.6	8.49
	M	8	61.0	3.16

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Data from this study showed that students who received instruction in multicultural education reported more positive attitudes toward social differences as measured by "Preference for Social Diversity" questionnaire than did the students from the control group who did not receive instruction in multicultural education. This may be due to the effectiveness of learning in the course of multicultural education or the natures of two different education programs. Students from Anderson University reported less favorable attitudes to social diversity. This may be because of the lack of instruction or exposure to knowledge and skills of dealing with diversity. Male students from the treatment group reported more favorable attitudes toward social diversity on the post test (5 out of 13 males reported an increased score ranging from 10 to 16 points). In the AU group female students reported less favorable attitudes toward social diversity (5 out of 19 females reported a decreased score ranging from 6 to 9 points). The findings strongly suggest the need for students at Anderson University to experience multicultural training and female students need to be encouraged to become more positive relative to cultural diversity.

Colleges and universities engaged in the preparation of teachers have a central role in the development of positive attitudes in our culturally pluralistic society. To achieve this goal, there is a need to foster the full recognition of cultural differences and to provide an effective educational program that makes positive attitudes toward cultural diversity real and meaningful.

Multicultural teacher training should not be left to choice or happenstance. Prospective teachers need to develop attitudes that are

understanding and supportive of all cultures. A multicultural course is essential to broaden students' understanding of their own culture and of cultural diversity (Pine & Hillard, 1990). Gay (1986) recommended that teachers' effectiveness, or lack thereof, with ethnically different students' multicultural content is a direct reflection of the quality of their professional preparation. Multicultural education is a way of teaching and also a way of learning (Rodriguez, 1983). Anderson University as an educational institution must provide leadership for the development of individual commitment to a social system where individual worth and dignity are highly valued. Teacher educators from all disciplines at Anderson University should demonstrate sensitivity toward individual differences in order to help students develop positive attitudes toward social diversity. A course of multicultural education combined with field experiences should be encouraged to increase the understanding and interactions among different cultural groups. The appreciation of arts, crafts, and wisdom from every culture in our society should be viewed as a foundation that supports and vitalizes the whole country. The administrative support for faculty members to obtain knowledge and skills necessary for working in the multicultural classrooms is essential for teachers to be effective in the society.

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